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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CE

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SUBJECT: Green Party in Southwest Germany Seeks the Center, New
Alliances

¶1. SUMMARY: The Green Party used its recent conventions in Hesse and Baden-Wuerttemberg (B-W) on November 14 and 21 respectively to discuss a political strategy for attracting centrist voters from the Free Democratic Party (FDP) and the Christian Democratic Union (CDU). Despite coming in fourth place in the parliamentary election, the Baden-Wuerttemberg Greens were upbeat about their chances, although outstanding questions remained about the party's future left-of-center or right-of-center position on Germany's political spectrum. The Hesse Greens - facing a similar dilemma - spoke out strongly against attempts to align the national Green Party with the forces of the political left. End Summary

GREEN SUCCESS IN GERMAN SOUTHWEST BUILT ON SOLID FOUNDATION

¶2. The Green Party had their best results in Southwest Germany in the September 27 parliamentary election. They earned 13.9% in Baden-Wuerttemberg, 9.7% in Rheinland-Pfalz, and 12% in Hesse. In Saarland, the Greens scored only 6.8%, but were instrumental in enabling the formation of the first state "Jamaica" (CDU-Green-FDP) coalition government. The Green Party has long enjoyed success on a communal level in Baden-Wuerttemberg with a series of Green Party mayors in key cities: Konstanz (Lord Mayor Horst Frank), Freiburg (Dieter Salomon), and Tuebingen (Boris Palmer). In June 2009, the Stuttgart Greens took over the Stuttgart City Council ending 38 years of CDU dominance. Stuttgart is the only State capital where the Greens make up the largest caucus in the city council. In Hesse, the home of the first Green minister, Joschka Fischer, the Greens have a similar strong base with the party winning 13.7% of votes in the 2009 state election. Frankfurt has a successful CDU-Green (black-green) governing coalition, which both parties have said they would be willing to continue after the communal elections in 2011.

BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG: LOOKING FOR CENTRIST VOTERS

¶3. Even before the parliamentary election on September 27 and the formation of Saarland's Jamaica coalition government, some Green Party politicians in Baden-Wuerttemberg realized that their success lay in winning centrist voters from other parties. "We are the new political middle," Stuttgart City Council Green Caucus Chief Wolfgang Woelfle said after his party won last June. Andreas Reissig, Chief of the Stuttgart SPD, noted that the Greens won the Stuttgart City Council because they were able to win votes from moderate CDU members who will be difficult to win back for the CDU. Reissig also hypothesized that some former FDP voters are now voting Green, which B-W FDP Spokesman Jan Havlik confirmed. Freiburg Lord Mayor Salomon publicly called on his party to discard the idea of being a "leftist" party. According to Salomon, the Greens need to normalize their relationship with the FDP. (Salomon is up for reelection in 2010 and has the support of the local CDU and Greens.)

¶4. Under B-W Minister-President Oettinger (CDU), open discussions about a future CDU-Green coalition in the state flourished. However, with Oettinger's future move to Brussels as EU Commissioner and his successor Stephan Mappus set to take over the B-W CDU, this

prospect now seems unlikely. At their state convention on November 21, the Green leadership heavily attacked Mappus for his archconservative course on family, integration and energy policies. Green leaders Silke Krebs and Chris Kuehn rejected any possibility of cooperating with him. Speaking at the convention, Greens Party Chief Cem Oezdemir also buried all hopes for a black/green alliance, calling Mappus "an impertinence" for every Green. However, the B-W Greens want to continue their current course and would like to become the second strongest party in the B-W state parliament after 2011, hoping to even surpass the dwindling SPD.

HESSE GREENS CHART PRAGMATIC APPROACH

15. At their recent party convention, the Hesse Greens charted a course for pragmatism. Olaf Cunitz, Green caucus chief of the Frankfurt Black-Green (CDU-Green) governing coalition, said the choice for the Green Party will be "to participate in the government with ideas or to be in the opposition with ideology." Cunitz argues that the days of the Greens winning former SPD voters is over and that the party is now gaining votes from the FDP (young urban academics, small families with double incomes.) The Secretary-General of the Hesse Greens, Kai Klose, critiqued the federal Green Party executive board further saying that if the federal chairs, Renate Kuenast and Juergen Trittin, do not take the lead in the necessary political reorientation of the Greens, the Hesse Green Party will lead an active opposition against them, together with the B-W Greens. At their party convention, the executive board of the Hesse Greens - under the leadership of their chair Tarek al-Wazir - introduced a motion to vote on a new definition of the Greens. The motion, which passed, positioned the

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Greens in the "left-of-center" of Germany's political landscape, thus placing them in direct competition for voters with the Social Democrats.

16. COMMENT: In the post-Saarland Jamaica coalition government era, the Green parties in Baden-Wuerttemberg and Hesse have indicated they are ready to pursue similar alliances with untraditional governing partners. Should the Greens federal executive board decide to drift to the left as a reaction to the new CDU/FDP coalition in Berlin, the national party could face serious resistance from state party organizations. It is yet to be seen how the national Green Party will manage discontent at the state level over the future political direction of the party. END COMMENT.

17. This cable was coordinated with Embassy Berlin.

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